No. **2**

About Melanesia

Life in a Mission Native School

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The Melanesian Mission is trying to build up a Christian Civilisation among various native peoples scattered over an area more than **TWO THOUSAND MILES** in length and containing hundreds of islands:—The New Hebrides Islands, The Banks Islands, The Torres Islands, The Santa Cruz Islands, The Reef Islands and the Solomon Islands.

Conditions are changing in Melanesia, thanks to the work of the Missionary. Tribal warfare has ceased; cannibalism has ceased; nearly all the coastal tribes are now Christian, and are freed from a dreadful life of fear and superstition. The ghastly heathen practices of bygone days are passing away.

The strength of the Mission lies in its educational work.

In addition to the work of the district missionary—a splendid adventurer for Christ—there are a number of

MISSION CENTRAL SCHOOLS

to which native boys and girls are sent from various islands for training for a period of from two to four years.

These Mission schools are a most potent factor in the development of the Islands which our Empire holds as a sacred trust.

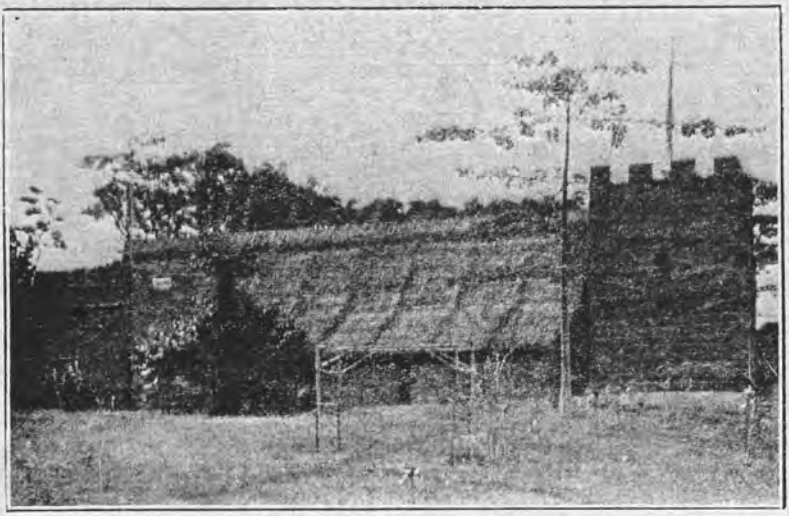
Many people in New Zealand, England and Australia support these schools or certain native scholars, and many have asked for the story of school life in Melanesia. This paper is written by one who is well qualified to write on the subject, for his life is dedicated to this noble work.

Life in a Mission Native School

It is the purpose of this article to give the reader a glimpse into the life that is led by boys in the central schools of the Mission—Vureas, Pamua, Maravovo and Pawa. Although what is written refers to All Hallows, Pawa, in particular, the general routine and scheme of education is in the main true of all the schools. In these central schools are gathered together some three hundred boys, picked from the different islands to be trained as teachers for the hundreds of villages whose inhabitants **are** the Church of Melanesia, and as missionaries to the heathen who as yet remain outside God's fold.

Picture a settlement set on a hill—bright green lawns, flowers of brilliant hue, great trees shielding one from the scorching sun, a row of brown houses of sago palm thatch, a cluster of class rooms, dining hall, one or two European houses, and dominating all in its site and dignity the school chapel, and you have the " alma mater " of the future Melanesian teacher.

It is 5.30 a.m. You are aroused from your dreams by a medley of noises—reveille on the bugle, the blowing of a conch shell, and the beating of a native drum. A cold bath (this is the only time the water is truly cold!) wakens you and shakes away the cobwebs, and you wend your way up



The School Chapel, Ugi, B.S. Is.

to church. It is not yet quite light, and inside the church you will find thirty to forty kneeling figures—boys who have quite voluntarily come to "Ganarono"—the Holy Eating—summoned by no church bell, but by the desire of their own hearts to refresh themselves with the sacramental Presence of Jesus in the Daily Eucharist. "It binds us all together in one fellowship," said one boy to me. True, indeed! one feels that the heart beat which gives life, colour and tone to the hundred-and-one activities of a big school is to be found in that first hour's communion with God and with each other.

6.30 a.m. A short service, not unlike family prayers, for those who have not come to "Ganarono," followed by tea and biscuits in the dining hall.

7 o'clock. Half-an-hour's drill on the parade ground while it is yet cool—lithe bodies exercising themselves in physical jerks, a dashing game of "twos and threes," roars of laughter at someone's discomfiture and the instructor's withering sarcasm, and bodies are tingling and aglow, and even the heaviest sleeper is wide awake and ready for the day's work.

7.30-9.30. Manual work of all kinds—bush to be cleared, scrub to be burned, a quarter-acre patch to be hoed up ready for planting kumaras when the rain comes, houses to be repaired, sago palm leaf to be sewn up for thatch, coconuts to be collected, husked and skinned ready for cooking into copra, fences to be repaired, cows to be milked and watered, and a hundred-and-one other jobs which are continually cropping up on a big station. This regular work all plays its part in the development and education of the boy, and it is to be hoped that the habit which he here forms of regular and systematic work will be influential in advancing the culture and civilisation of his native village when he returns home.

9.30. Conch shell! "Down tools!" A plunge in the sea or swimming bath, and all are soon sitting in the dining hall, appeasing ravenous appetites with boiled rice flavoured with coconut oil.

10-1.30. School. Having collected from their houses their books and slates, etc., the boys are soon settled in their respective class rooms, intent on learning something new. A Melanesian boy—unlike his white brother!—is literally thirsting for knowledge.. He loves his periods of study, and, even if not brilliant in the "uptake," is a real plodder. His patience is inexhaustible, and the greater conglomeration of figures he can manipulate into his multiplication sum, the better arithmetician he deems himself Would that his schoolmaster were as patient! The morning school consists of New

The School Houses, Ugi, B.S. Is.

Testament and Old Testament, arithmetic, reading, writing and English—sometimes varied by Church History, Catechism, Prayer Book study, physical geography, " first aid " to the injured, essay writing, and other subjects which will broaden the outlook and stimulate the intellect.

1.30. School is over and the afternoon free until 6 o'clock. Even the most fluent pen would be unable to enumerate the multitudinous activities and pastimes that are indulged in by the schoolboy during those hours. Here is a party of bathers riding the surf—there is a fisherman bent on some big catch—a little farther along a group chattering around a camp fire, cooking their beloved "soupsoup"—mashed kumaras mixed with coconut milk—delicious! Here is a boy burning lime with which to whiten his hair. There is a canoe party going out with their nets to catch turtles. "Tanun agaga " (white man)! See! he is going duck shooting, and as he makes his way to the mangrove swamp he is joined by an ever-increasing company of boys intent on being in it at the kill and retrieving the spoil.

But if you want to see some sport, come to the playing field. A cricket match—the final of the house championship —is in progress. The fielding is magnificent. Cheers as the popular slogger gets a six! Now he has hit a ball up into a palm tree, and the batsmen are running merrily up and down while the fieldsmen climb the tree and recover the ball. How

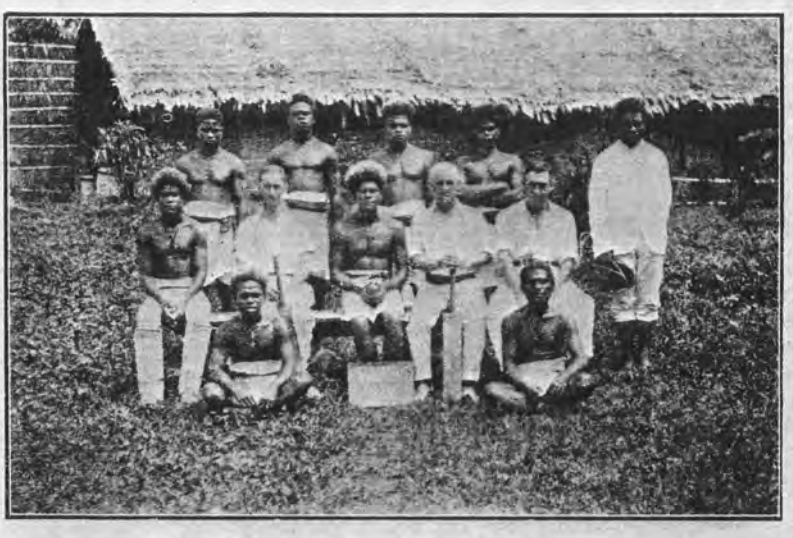
many for that? Nine! That's nothing! One day fifty-two runs were scored while the ball was lodged in a tree and the tree was being hewn down with an axe to recover the ball. Glorious cricket.

And how much better than the old days, when an outlet to one's energies could be found only by head-hunting and warfare! **Now** it is team first, self second; **then,** self first and self all the time: "If I don't get **his** head, he will get mine!"

6 o'clock. The boys are coming back from all directions, relating to each other the events of the afternoon. What a babel of voices!

6.15. Evening meal—boiled kumaras or tomagos, part of which are consumed on the premises, the remainder being put by the bedside for the night; the Melanesian is always hungry, night and day!

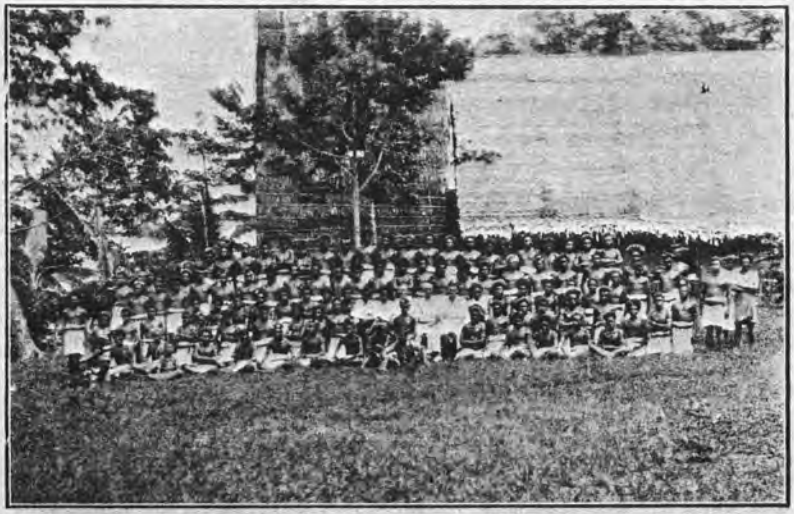
7 o'clock. Evensong—a wonderfully inspiring sight. A hundred boys in the beautiful chapel, kneeling with reverent pose and intenseness of worship. Listen to the harmonies and the vigour of the singing. Here is an offering which is surely acceptable to God. Pray, reader, pray hard that God will accept the offering of these young lives to Himself, and that He will bless them and "give the increase" that through these boys' witness and service to Him many may be won for



The School Cricket Eleven, Ugi, B.S. Is.

Christ, and His Kingdom be extended to every isle. The problems and difficulties that are going to confront these young men on their return to their villages are manifold and of great magnitude. [Here at school is their refuge and sure defence.] Believe me, they need **your** prayers and abundance of God's grace to win through.

Church is over. Perhaps it is the day for choir practice or band practice. Would that you could hear the bugle band —the pride of the school—or see the school, a goodly company, on parade: the band in front, bugles shining, and the thrilling rat-a-tat-tat of the drums, followed by the rank and file in fours, arms swinging, chests out, and look of pride



The School, Ugi, B.S. Is.

Principal: The Rev. R. C. Rudgard.

on their faces. Pride of race, pride of King, pride of Empire. Assuredly His Majesty may number "Young Melanesia" amongst his loyal and devoted subjects.

9 o'clock. The bell rings three times—the signal for bed. With weary limbs (but **so** healthily weary) each boy is soon in bed, and as the echo of "Lights Out" reverberates from the surrounding hills all is quiet and still. "Young Melanesia" is asleep—at peace with the world under the Everlasting Arms.

A Writer in an **Australian paper** states:—

> "Go and see the hardships, discomforts, and loneliness of such work. Go and see the happiness of the new life of these savages. There are men and women who, year in and year out, and in the vigorous times of their lives, are silently and unseen fighting a great fight, which in time will benefit mankind. We may sneer at the missionary, but they are the heralds of progress and prosperity . . . ."